

U.S. EMBASSY OTTAWA
PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
The 2023 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF)

The Embassy of the United States in Canada announces an open competition for past participants (“alumni”) of U.S. government-funded and U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to submit applications to the 2023 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2023). We seek proposals from teams of at least two alumni that meet all program eligibility requirements below. Exchange alumni interested in participating in AEIF 2023 should submit proposals to AlumniCanada@state.gov by March 17, 2023.

A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

AEIF provides alumni of U.S. government-sponsored and facilitated exchange programs with funding to expand on skills gained during their exchange experience and to design and implement innovative solutions to global challenges facing their community. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition. AEIF 2023 proposals in Canada should support one or more of the following policy priorities:

- Build and strengthen North American Arctic partnerships in security, climate change, entrepreneurship, cultural exchanges, and/or other fields;
- Support economic opportunities for women, youth, underrepresented groups, and Indigenous peoples;
- Promote democracy, human rights, and social justice;
- Promote diverse voices with artistic engagement.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Announcement posted: November 21, 2022

Closing date for applications: March 17, 2023

Funding type: Small grant awards

Decision date: no later than June 30, 2023

Expected size of individual awards: Between US\$5,000 to US\$35,000.

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in 24 months or less.

C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

The following individuals are eligible to apply:

- Applicants must be alumni of a U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program (<https://alumni.state.gov/list-exchange-programs>) or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program (<https://j1visa.state.gov/>).
- Projects teams must include at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries.
- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or alumni associations of U.S. government exchanges. Not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions are not eligible to apply directly but can serve as partners to the alumni team for implementing project activities.

2. Cost Sharing

“Cost sharing” refers to the practice of splitting the costs of a grant program between the U.S. government and the grantee organization or individual. Applicants are not required to share costs, but a cost share must be identified in the budget proposal if an alumni team wishes to use cost sharing.

3. Grant Program Area:

Proposals must address the themes indicated in the program description (Section A). Proposals that do not address the themes outlined in the program description will be deemed ineligible. All project activities must take place outside of the United States and its territories.

4. Other Eligibility Requirements

If the grant is awarded to an individual, that individual is not required to have a UEI (Unique Entity ID) number or be registered in SAM.gov. However, should the grant be awarded to an organization that is a partner in the project, that organization must have a UEI and a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Organizations must have a commitment to equal opportunity employment practices and to non-discrimination practices towards beneficiaries, without regard to race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.

Applicants are only allowed to submit **one** proposal.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Notice of Funding Opportunity and Proposal Submission Instructions

Application and budget templates are available here:

- [2023 AEIF Proposal Form](#)
- [2023 AEIF Budget Form](#)

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives listed in this funding opportunity;
- The proposal addresses all questions in the official AEIF 2023 guidelines;
- All documents are in English;
- The budget is in U.S. dollars and is submitted using the designated AEIF 2023 budget form;
- All pages are numbered.

The following documents and information are required:

1. Mandatory application forms

- a. [2023 AEIF Proposal Form](#) listing Project Team Information; Proposal Summary; Project Goals and Objectives; Project Methods, Design, and Timeline; Local Project Partners; Communication Plan; and Project Monitoring and Evaluation details (defined in items 2-8 in this section).
- b. [2023 AEIF Budget Form](#) including a Budget Justification Narrative (defined in item 9 in this section).

2. Project Team Information: At least two exchange alumni team members are required for a project to be considered for funding. Applications need to provide the name and contact information for each team member, describe the role each team member will have in the project, and describe each team member's experience, qualifications, and ability to carry out that role. Applicants need to indicate what proportion of the team member's time will be used in support of the project.

3. Proposal Summary: A short narrative which outlines the proposed project, including challenge/s to be addressed, project objectives, and anticipated impact.

4. Project Goals and Objectives: The goal(s) of the proposed project need to describe what the project will achieve and include the objectives which support the goal(s). Objectives should be specific, measurable, and realistically achievable in a set time frame.

5. **Project Methods, Design, and Timeline:** A description of how the project is expected to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal(s). This should include a description of the project's direct and indirect beneficiaries as well as a plan on how to continue the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable. The proposed timeline for the project activities should include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events. Applicants may also submit proposed workshop or training agendas and materials.
6. **Local Project Partners:** A list of partners who will support the proposed project, if applicable.
7. **Communication Plan:** The communication plan should include a communication and outreach strategy for promoting the proposed project. It may include social media, websites, print news, or other forms of media intended to use to share information about the project to beneficiaries and the public. Communications should include AEIF 2023, Exchange Alumni, and U.S. Embassy branding.
8. **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** The Monitoring and Evaluation component of the proposal should detail how the proposal's activities will advance the program's goals and objectives. This should include any outcomes showing a change in knowledge, awareness, and attitudes; improved quality of services; increased capacity at a school, group; etc. Proposals should also include how the grantee will measure the impact of planned activities.
9. **Budget Justification Narrative:** Applicants must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative justification using the template provided. Line-item expenditures should be listed in the greatest possible detail. Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

AEIF 2023 can support the following:

- Intra-regional (between Canada and other countries in the region, excluding the United States) or in-country transportation
- Rental of venues for project activities
- PPE and sanitizing equipment
- Meals/refreshments integral to the project (i.e., working lunch for a meeting)
- Reasonable costs to support virtual programming (i.e., subscription to Zoom, WebEx, camera/microphones for virtual meetings, mailing services, etc.)
- Trainer or speaker honoraria expenses (i.e. honoraria fees up to \$200 USD per day per speaker, travel, lodging, and per diem)
- Reasonable equipment and materials
- Communications and publicity materials, such as manuals or project advertisements

Budget Restrictions: AEIF 2023 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

- Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories
- Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
- Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
- Academic or scientific research
- Charitable or development activities
- Provision of direct social services to a population
- Individual scholarships
- Social travel/visits
- Gifts or prizes
- Duplication of existing programs
- Institutional development of an organization
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in a project
- Support for religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

E. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Evaluation Criteria: The U.S. embassy or consulate Public Diplomacy Sections will use the criteria outlined below to evaluate all applications. The proposals will be reviewed by a Selection Committee made up of regional and exchange program experts located at the Department of State in Washington, DC. Panelists will use the criteria below to review and evaluate applications.

Relevance to Application Theme

The proposal provides sufficient information on how the activities will support the theme(s) of the competition. The narrative explains any relevant local context the D.C. Selection Committee may not be aware of in relation to this project. Proposed project ideas must be public diplomacy in nature (i.e. not development or military).

Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan

When developing the purpose, summary, description, and implementation plan, applicants should aim to make all descriptions clear, concise, and compelling. Reviewers will judge the proposals based on the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the community where it is undertaken. Does the project address an important gap of understanding or need? If the aim of the project is achieved, how will existing knowledge or practice be improved? What audience do the applicants hope to reach with this project? How many will participate? How will they be selected?

Degree of Alumni Involvement

Projects must include the involvement of at least two (2) exchange alumni. They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with PAS in formulating the project. More than two alumni may comprise the team, however, the minimum is two. As the team leaders, the alumni must be closely involved in project planning, implementation, etc. Applicants should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, e-mail address, exchange program, country of citizenship, and roles and responsibilities.

Participation and Support from Local Partners

The proposal demonstrates buy-in and support from the community where the project will take place. Local partner involvement is a strong sign that there is community support and that the project will engage a broad array of experts, such as subject matter experts, community centers, academic institutions, businesses, local/national government, non-governmental organizations, American Spaces, etc.

Evaluation and Impact of the Project

A monitoring & evaluation (M&E) plan is pivotal to project implementation and important tracking progress towards the project's objectives and goals. An M&E plan should consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress toward specific outputs and outcomes as well as how that data collection will be accomplished. Well-crafted indicators should be used to understand a program's progress toward the desired results. An M&E plan should be reviewed for the following:

- Completion
- Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators
- Clear approach to monitoring
- Adherence to SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely)
- Feasibility of baselines and targets
- Data quality plan
- Capacity to implement plan

Communication, Media, and Outreach Plan

The project should include a clear plan and timeline for how and when the team will share information about the project. It is important to ensure that the U.S. Embassy gets recognition throughout the process, if circumstances permit.

Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

Disclaimer: This notice is subject to availability of funding. U.S. Embassy Ottawa does not guarantee availability of funding by receiving applications under this announcement. Only successful applicants will be contacted.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

The grant award will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The DS-1909 assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the DS-1909 grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method: Payments will be made in Canadian dollars to a Canadian bank account via electronic fund transfer, in allotments mutually pre-determined between the grantee and the Grants Officer. U.S. Embassy Ottawa maintains the right to withhold final payment until receipt of the closing grant reports.

Reporting Requirements: Recipients will be required to submit financial reports and program reports. The award document will specify how often these reports must be submitted. Closing reports are due within 120 days of the grant's end date.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

Questions about the grant application process should be directed to:
AlumniCanada@state.gov.